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Amendment 2 protest held by women's group

By **Louls Agullar**
Gazette Telegraph

The League of Women Voters of Colorado opposes Amendment 2 as a violation of gays' civil rights. So it protested in what it thought was the best way possible: by meeting in Colorado Springs.

About 50 league members took time out from their state convention here — in the birthplace of Amendment 2 — to stage a short rally Saturday denouncing the amendment. The measure bans laws protecting gays from discrimination based on their sexual orientation.

"We want the debate to be held in a civil matter — that is, in a lowered, reasonable voice," said Betsy McBride, state league president, as the group stood on the steps of the Pioneers Museum in downtown Colorado Springs.

The league is part of a small but growing number of groups who are critical of Amendment 2 but unwilling to support the boycott endorsed by many gay rights groups nationwide.

"We feel Amendment 2 is wrong," McBride said. "But we urge . . . people to conduct the debate with tolerance for multiple views. You can't understand those multiple points of view if in fact you don't come to the state."

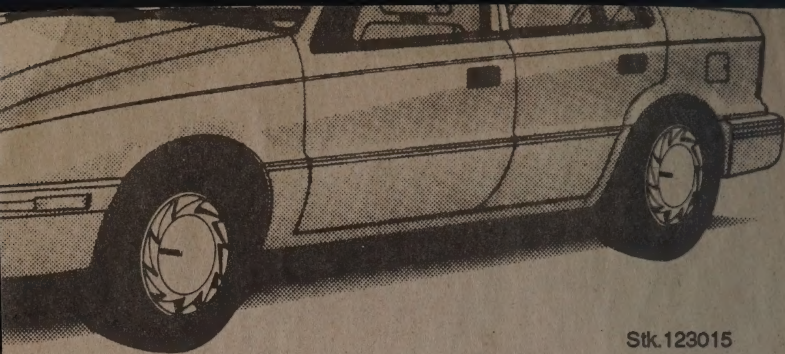
The Colorado Bar Association, after much debate, also

decided to ignore the boycott. It originally canceled its October convention in Colorado Springs, but reversed that decision after an outcry from its members. Instead, the group is including in its conference a series of debates on gays' protection under the law. The bar may even try to broadcast some of those debates nationally through a cable television company.

Colorado Springs has lost \$2 million to \$3 million in canceled conventions since voters approved Amendment 2 last November. Denver has lost an estimated \$33 million. But no conventions have been canceled in the past few weeks. In that time, Denver officials have learned of several groups who have opted to hold conferences that include some show of protest against the measure or debate regarding gay rights.

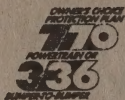
Moreover, a group of Denver business, church and civic leaders hopes it soon will have enough influence and organization to keep the trend going. That group, called the Colorado Alliance to Restore Equality, opened offices last week in Denver.

"We do want to shift away from the boycott," said Linda Fowler, who heads the group. "We want the debate to center on civil rights. That's the true point of all of this."



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